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Lesson Plans

Using your Vocabulary Cards



Before you begin

This activity can be done with one or several children. When you are ready to use the cards, begin by finding out which names the child(ren) knows already. Here's one way to do that.

1. Hold the stack of vocabulary cards in your hand.
2. Place one card in front of the child (making sure it faces him/her from the correct perspective) and ask: "Tell me if you know what this is."
3. If the child knows the name of the card, place it in a pile facing up. If the child doesn't know the name, place it in a separate pile face down.
4. Choose 3 or 4 of the cards the child does not know and proceed with the 3-Step Lesson.

Teaching Vocabulary with the 3-Step Lesson

This teaching format is excellent for helping children master vocabulary while building their confidence.

Step 1

1. Place 3 or 4 vocabulary cards on a clean workspace that is free from distractions.
2. Touch and name the first card. Say, "This is a hammer, hammer."
3. Encourage the child to repeat the word.
4. Repeat this for the other objects.

Step 2

1. Move your hands away and say, "Show me the hammer."
2. The child should point to, pick up, or touch the hammer card. If s/he cannot or points to the wrong card, simply use your own hand to point to the correct card and repeat step 1.
3. "Put the hammer here," and point to a new spot on the workspace where the child can put the card (keeping it in the right perspective).
4. Continue to ask the child to "show you" the other objects. Keep it lively by asking them to put the cards in different locations. Have fun!

Step 3

1. Point to a card and say, "What is this?"
2. If the child does not say the name, give him/her a hint like the first sound of the word. Do whatever you can to help the child succeed! If s/he still cannot name the object, return to step 2.
3. When the child grows confident with the vocabulary, have fun by mixing up the cards before asking the child to name them. Add an element of mystery by asking the child to close his/her eyes while you or some other children mix up the cards.

Playing I Spy

You can use a subset of the vocabulary cards as well as small objects in your environment to play I Spy sound games. These are very important in helping the child to hear the individual sounds in our language. Here's an example of playing I Spy with the beginning sounds in words.

1. Say, "Place each picture on the table and tell me its name." Have each child take out one vocabulary card or object, say its name, and place it on the workspace. (Note: When you choose the pictures or objects for this work, be sure they all have different beginning sounds.)
2. Say, "I'm going to see if you can guess what I want! I spy with my little eye something on the mat that starts with 'kuh, kuh.'" If they can't figure it out, give them hints, point to it, and/or pronounce the next syllable. "That's it! Couch!"
3. Repeat the word and have the child repeat it. Do this for all the objects. Then, mix up the objects and repeat the game.
4. Say, "Show me how nicely you clean this up." Help the child do it beautifully.

Notes

- ▶ When you begin working with a child, be sure s/he has mastered the names of the:
 1. parts of his/her body
 2. other students
 3. objects/locations in the classroom/home
- ▶ These cards usually initiate some conversation. Talk about the objects as the discussion arises but stay focused. If a child is very talkative, respectfully ask him to give another child a chance or to save the story so you can hear it at lunchtime or later—be sure to follow-up!
- ▶ When you start using the 3-step lesson, remember that *most learning takes place during step 2* (when you are saying the vocabulary and the child is finding it). This is when the child's body and mind are simultaneously engaged. Take your time at this point and have fun. Try placing the cards on the opposite side of the room and ask the child to bring the one you name. Be sure not to move too quickly to step 3 or you will frustrate the child and s/he may not wish to use the cards again.
- ▶ Always give the child the opportunity to repeat the work. You or another child can mix up the cards for him/her so s/he can start over.
- ▶ Finish the work by reviewing the vocabulary. Say, "Let's put the moth away first." Have the child hand you the card or place it in its container. Continue to put the cards away one at a time, naming each as you go.

Using your Matching Cards

Before you begin

This activity can be done with one or several children. Be sure the child knows the names of all of the objects pictured before trying to match them. Follow the instructions for *Using Your Vocabulary Cards* to accomplish this.



Matching

Depending on the abilities of the child(ren), you can begin with a subset of 6 pairs of cards or use the full set of 12 pairs. Also, you can keep the red- and blue-backed sets of cards in separate containers or mix them together in one container. If they are mixed, begin the exercise with the cards face down and sort into two piles.

1. Lay out the red set face-up in a column on the left side of your work area (make a second column for the rest of the red cards in the middle-right of your work area if you are using all 12 pairs).
2. As you place each card on the workspace, say the name of each object. “This is a swallowtail, swallowtail.” If the child doesn’t say the name spontaneously, encourage him/her to repeat it after you and check to make sure this is not new vocabulary for the child.
3. Take the first blue-backed card and say, “Let’s see if these cards look the same as any of the ones here. Let’s see if they match.” Beginning at the top of the column, look for the match and place it next to the matching card.
4. Ask the child to continue (do more examples if you need to).
5. When the child is finished, gently correct any errors (of orientation or matching) without speaking.
6. Always give the child the opportunity to repeat the work. You can mix up the cards for him/her so she can start over.
7. When you clean up, repeat the name of each object as you return it to the container.

Memory Matching

Use one matching set but instead of laying them right side up on your workspace, lay them out in a grid pattern, upside-down. Children take turns trying to find matches.

Sorting

Create a sorting game by using the red-backed cards from one topic (e.g., Around Town) and the blue-backed cards from a different topic (e.g., In the Kitchen). Mix the cards together and place them face up on the workspace.

1. Take the first card out of the basket and ask: “What is this?” (If the child doesn’t know the name, say it, have the child repeat it, and move on to the next card.)
2. Place the card in a column on the left side of the workspace.
3. Take the next card out and ask, “What is this?” then place it on the left side if it is part of the first category or start a new column to the right side if it is part of the next category. Continue until you have at least 2 of each category laid out.
4. Ask the child to take the next card out, name it, and place it in the proper column.
5. When the child is finished with all the cards, gently correct any errors (of orientation or sorting) without speaking.
6. Always give the child the opportunity to repeat the work. You or another child can mix up the cards for him/her so she can start over.
7. Finish the work by using the 3-step lesson:
 - Ask, “Show me the fire hydrant.” and have the child say worm and point to it.
 - Ask, “What is this?” and have the child say worm and point to it.
 - Say, “Let’s put the fire hydrant away first.” Have the child hand you the card or place it in its container. Continue to put the cards away one at a time, naming each as you go.

Sorting & Matching

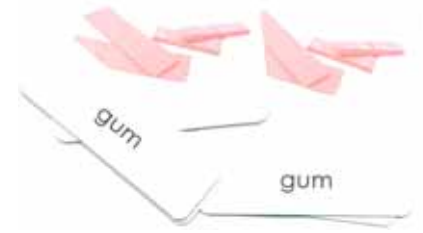
For a greater challenge, mix two entire sets (red- and blue-backed cards) together.

1. Sort them into piles by color.
2. Sort the red cards into categories (eg, wildflowers and butterflies) as you lay them out.
3. Match the blue cards to the laid out red cards.

Notes

These cards usually initiate some conversation from the child. Talk about the objects as the discussion arises but stay focused. If a child is very talkative, respectfully ask him to give another child a chance or to save the story so you can hear it at lunchtime or later—be sure to follow-up!

Using your Phonetic Reading Cards



Before you begin

Magic—it happens the moment a child reads his/her first word. It is the discovery that communication can occur through the right combination of those little printed characters called letters. This discovery is not something we as adults can make happen. It will occur on its own time table and for reasons that will remain mysterious. We can only prepare the child to make the discovery.

We must teach the child the sound of each letter in the alphabet; the shape of each letter; and the sequence of letters (from left to right). Using moveable letters (like the Montessori moveable alphabet or even refrigerator magnet letters), we can show them how to put sounds together to make words (eg, sound out and spell c-a-t or k-a-t—spelling doesn't count at this stage!). Keep in mind that this process of building a word (encoding) is much easier than the process of reading a word (decoding) and, thus, should always come first. Once this preparation is complete, we wait.

Introduce this material when you feel the child is ripe for the discovery. If you try it and s/he is not yet able to interpret the written symbols, wait and try again some time later. Revisit the preparatory steps to ensure there are no gaps in the child's understanding.

Reading the Phonetic Words

This activity can be done with one or several children. Before you try this work, use the picture-only cards alone in a vocabulary lesson. See *Using Your Vocabulary Cards* for more information. The child must know all vocabulary before s/he will be able to succeed with this work. Obviously, the child must also know the sounds associated with each letter included in the cards (see note above on preparation for this work).

The reading cards follow a specific order that builds confidence in the child. Always begin with level 1, packet A. It is better for the child to feel s/he is too smart for the work than that the work is too smart for him/her!

1. Find a clean workspace that is free from distractions.
2. Place the control cards upside-down on the workspace.
3. Place the picture-only cards right side up in a column on the left side of the workspace.
4. Say, "Look at each picture and tell me what it is." Repeat the name carefully.
5. Say, "I'm going to write you a secret. I wonder if you can figure out what I want!" Write the name of one object on a slip of paper. Formulate your letters carefully so they are easy for the child to identify (if you have taught him/her lowercase print letters, write in lowercase print; if s/he has learned cursive, write in cursive). Let him/her see you write.
6. Help them pronounce the word and place it next to the corresponding picture on the workspace. Continue with all of the objects.

7. Say, “Close your eyes, I’m going to mix them up!” Mix the words (leave the pictures alone) and have the child match them again. Then, mix the pictures (leave the words alone). Finally, mix them both up.
8. Say, “What does this one say?” and help the child read and match.
9. After the child has done this a few times, you can introduce the control cards. Say, “Let me show you a way to check and see if you’re right!” Layout the control cards next to the matching pictures. Let the child discover his/her own errors and fix them independently. If s/he can’t see the errors, s/he may not be ready for this work. Back-up and review the letter sounds/symbols.
10. Show him/her the printed word slips and say, “Next time you can do this work by yourself or with a friend. Just use these special printed slips.” Read the words together and match them to the pictures.
11. Say, “Let’s clean these up so nicely so they’ll be ready for us to use next time.” Help the child to clean the work up beautifully.

Notes

- ▶ Always give the child the opportunity to repeat the work. You or another child can mix up the cards for him/her so she can start over.
- ▶ As the child masters each packet, introduce a new packet. Change the packets often enough to maintain the child’s interest. When s/he has read all of the packets, try mixing the packets to increase the level of difficulty.
- ▶ If the child is also able to write letters, you may want to extend this activity by having him/her copy the words or write them from memory. (Either you or another child can read the words on each card to the child. The child then writes them down without looking. If the child wants to, s/he can check the work with the control cards.) Be careful not to stress accurate spellings too early (spelling doesn’t count before age 6)—this may lead to frustration and resistance to doing the work in the future.

Using your 3-Part Reading Cards



Before you begin

This activity can be done with one or several children. Begin by using the photograph cards alone in a vocabulary lesson. See *Using Your Vocabulary Cards* for more information. *The child must know all vocabulary before s/he will be able to succeed with this work.*

These cards include phonetic and non-phonetic words. They should be used with more advanced readers—children who have completed the entire phonetic reading card program. Remember, it is better for the child to feel s/he is too smart for the work than that the work is too smart for him/her!

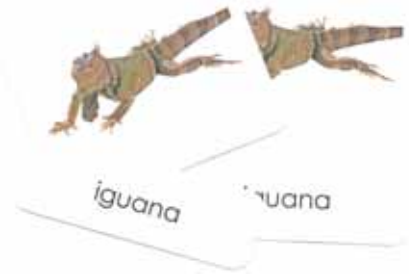
Reading the Words

1. Find a clean workspace that is free from distractions.
2. Place the control cards upside-down on the workspace.
3. Place the picture-only cards right side up in a column on the left side of the workspace. Say the name of each as you put it down.
4. Pick up a word only card. Say, “**Let’s see if you can match the pictures with these names.**” Help them with a few (sound out each letter/phonogram) and then place the labels under the corresponding picture.
5. Say, “**Now, let’s check and see if we were right!**” Layout the control cards next to the matching pictures. Let the child discover his/her own errors and fix them independently. If s/he can’t see the errors, s/he may not be ready for this work. Back-up and review the letter sounds/symbols.

Notes

- ▶ Always give the child the opportunity to repeat the work. You or another child can mix up the cards for him/her so she can start over.
- ▶ Begin with the cards that the child is most familiar with (eg, the Transportation cards for a child who loves cars).
- ▶ For fluent readers, you can extend this activity by having him/her copy the words or write them from memory. (Either you or another child can read the words on each card to the child. The child then writes them down without looking. If the child wants to, s/he can check the work with the control cards.) Be careful not to stress accurate spellings too early (spelling doesn’t count before age 6)—this may lead to frustration and resistance to doing the work in the future.

Using your Zoology/Natural World Cards



Before you begin

These cards are designed for vocabulary building, sorting, and reading (3-part version) work. These activities can be done with one or several children.

Proceed through these presentations as the child is ready for each. Always move from categories of great contrast to those of finer detail. Sorting categories of finest detail (eg, mollusks and echinoderms) should be reserved for advanced/older students.

1. Vocabulary presentations (see *Using Your Vocabulary Cards* for more information)
2. Group characteristic presentations (see below)
3. Sorting activities (see *Using your Matching Cards: Sorting* for more information)
4. Reading activities (see *Using your 3-Part Cards* for more information)

Presenting Group Characteristics

Be sure the children know all vocabulary before beginning this work. Each packet includes a description of the main, distinguishing features of that group. Memorize this information before presenting this work to a child. You must be able to clearly state the characteristics of each group as you begin this work.

1. Find a clean workspace that is free from distractions.
2. Place the cards upside-down on the workspace.
3. If you are presenting this information to younger, primary-aged children say, “Let’s learn about things that are living. We are living. This rug is not living. Living things eat, grow, move, and reproduce. Let’s look at some living things.”

If you are presenting this information to older, elementary-aged children say, “Let’s learn about what it means to be living. We are living. We are alive. This table is not living. It is not alive. Living things consume food, excrete wastes, grow, move, reproduce, are irritable, and adjust to fit into their environment. Let’s look at some pictures of other living things.”

4. For younger children, review each photo and discuss what each living thing eats, how it grows, how it moves, and whether its young are born or hatched.

For older children, review each photo and discuss what each living thing consumes and excretes, how it grows, how it moves, whether its young are born or hatched, how it displays irritability (responds to stimuli from its environment), and how it adjusts to fit into its environment.

Using your “Parts of” Photo Cards



Before you begin

This activity can be done with one or several children. Begin by using the picture-only cards alone in a vocabulary lesson. See *Using Your Vocabulary Cards* for more information. The child must know all vocabulary before s/he will be able to succeed with the “parts of” cards.

Reading the Words

The words on these cards are advanced. They should be attempted only by advanced readers thoroughly familiar with the vocabulary.

1. Find a clean workspace that is free from distractions.
2. Place the control cards upside-down on the workspace.
3. Place the picture-only cards right side up in a column on the left side of the workspace. Say the name of each as you put it down.
4. Pick up a word only card. Say, **“Let’s see if we can match the pictures with these names.”** Help them with a few (sound out each word) and then place the labels under the corresponding picture.
5. Say, **“Now, let’s check and see if we were right!”** Layout the control cards next to the matching pictures. Let the child discover his/her own errors and fix them independently. If s/he can’t see the errors, s/he may not be ready for this work. Back-up and review the letter sounds/symbols and/or the vocabulary involved.

Making a Book

Each packet comes with a black-and-white master. Make photocopies of the master and have a stack of them available in a basket next to the parts of cards.

1. Find a clean workspace that is free from distractions.
2. Place the control cards, one piece of the photocopied paper, and a set of colored pencils (you may wish to preselect the colors) on your workspace in this order from left to right.
3. Look at the first control card. Color in the sheet to match it and write the word on the line.
4. Move the colored sheet to the side, turn the control card over (so you can see the next card), and return to the shelf for another coloring sheet.
5. Invite the child to color a sheet. When all parts are colored, bind the papers into a book.

Notes

- ▶ Always give the child the opportunity to repeat the work. You or another child can mix up the cards for him/her so she can start over.

Using your Definition Cards



Before you begin

This activity can be done with one or several children. Before doing this work, the children must know all vocabulary presented in the “Parts of” Photo Cards (*see previous page*). (Making a book is a good way to help children internalize the vocabulary.) You will use the “Parts of” Photo Cards to begin this work.

Match Definition to Photo

1. Find a clean workspace that is free from distractions.
2. Get the Definition cards and the corresponding “Parts of” Photo Cards. Place the cards on the top left corner of the workspace.
3. Hand the child the photo cards and say, “**Let’s see how nicely you can lay these out for me.**” Help them layout the picture cards in column format. Leave space in this layout to lace the definition card to the right of the photo-only card and then, later, the photo control card to the left of the photo-only card.
4. Hand the child the full definition control cards (includes the term and its full definition). Say, “**Let’s see if you can match the pictures with these definition cards.**” Help them with a few.
5. Say, “**Now, let’s check and see if we were right!**” Take a photo control card (including the photo and term) and place it next to the matching photo card. Point out that the photo matches and then check to see if the term matches. If it doesn’t, pick up the definition card and place it at the top of the work space to be rematched.
6. Once everything has been matched, say, “**Let’s clean up by picking up all the definitions first. Then we’ll do the pictures.**” Help them do it well.

Match Term to Full Definition

1. Find a clean workspace that is free from distractions.
2. Get the Definition cards and place them on the top left corner of the workspace.
3. Pick up the word-only cards and lay them out in columns (leaving room for the definition card beneath each term and, later, for the control card to the right of each term).
4. Pick up the complete definition cards (missing only the defined term) and say, “**Let’s see if we can match these definitions with these terms.**” Help them with a few.
5. Say, “**Now, let’s check and see if we were right!**” Lay the definition control cards (including the term and entire definition) and place them to the right of each corresponding term. If the definition doesn’t match, pick it up and place it at the top of the workspace to be rematched.
6. Once everything has been matched, say, “**Let’s clean up by picking up all the control cards first. Then, we’ll do the definitions and then the terms.**” Help them to do it well.

Match Term to Definition Part 1 and Definition Part 2

1. Find a clean workspace that is free from distractions.
2. Get the Definition cards and place them on the top left corner of the workspace.
3. Pick up the word-only cards and lay them out in columns (leaving room for both definition cards beneath each term and, later, for the control card to the right of each term).
4. Pick up the definition cards part 1 (the first half of the definition) and say, “Let’s see if we can match the first parts of these definitions with these terms.” Help them with a few.
5. Pick up the definition cards part 2 (the second half of the definition) and say, “Let’s see if we can match the second parts of these definitions with the rest.” Help them with a few. You may need to rematch the first parts of the definitions based on what you discover here.
6. Say, “Now, let’s check and see if we were right!” Lay the definition control cards (including the term and entire definition) and place them to the right of each corresponding term. If either part of the definition doesn’t match, pick it up and place it at the top of the workspace to be rematched.
7. Once everything has been matched, say, “Let’s clean up by picking up all the control cards first. Then, we’ll do the second half of the definitions, then the first half, and then the terms.” Help them to do it well.

Notes

- This is a wonderful work for the child who is a fluent reader. It helps develop reading comprehension skills. It works well with 2 or 3 children working together.

Using your Math Equations

Before you begin

These equations are designed to be used with concrete manipulative materials such as the Montessori golden beads and/or the Montessori stamp game. For children who are able to write numbers legibly, offer them equation slips to copy the problem and write their solution. They may like to paste the completed slip into a notebook (this creates a wonderful historical record of their progress). A master for photocopying these slips is included with the equations. We recommend laminating or placing the master in a protective sheet (so you don't accidentally cut it along with the copies).



Each set of equations contains static (no borrowing/carrying) problems and dynamic (with borrowing/carrying) problems. Dynamic equations are marked with a star in the equation's upper right-hand corner. Always begin with static problems. Work with these repeatedly until the operation's concept (eg, addition means "put it all together beginning with the smallest things") is completely clear.

When you are ready for dynamic problems, use the concrete materials to reinforce the process of making exchanges. For example, show the child clearly that 10 units are the same as one ten bar. Let the child experiment with making exchanges. Children often "discover" these equivalences for themselves—how wonderful!

Present the operations in the following order: (1) **Addition** (put it together); (2) **Multiplication** (put it together so many times); (3) **Subtraction** (take it away); and, (4) **Division** (take it away/share it out so many times).

Addition

When introducing the child to static addition, be sure to explain the following two basic rules. Say, "Today we're going to do some addition work. Addition means put it all together. What does addition mean?" Have the children repeat the first rule. Then, continue by saying, "We always start by putting together the smallest things first. What do we put together first?" Again, encourage the children to repeat the rule. Introduce the operation this way every time you do the work in order to reinforce the concept.

The first time you do addition, you may want to introduce the plus sign. To do this, say, "Addition is a long word. Instead of saying it every time, we like to draw this symbol." Draw the plus sign on a slip of paper (preferably in red to stay with the color-coding). Then continue by saying, "This says addition. It means put it all together!"

When you begin dynamic problems, review the first two rules as above and then add a new rule. Say, "Today, we have a special new rule to follow. When you get to 10, stop. What's the rule?" Encourage repetition and have fun when they're counting and reach 10—be dramatic about the stop!

Multiplication

Follow the same procedures as for addition (begin with static problems, explain and repeat the rules, introduce the symbol by writing it in yellow) but explain the rules for multiplication. Say, “Today we’re going to do some multiplication work. Multiplication means put the same thing together so many times. We always put the smallest things together first.” Again, encourage the children to repeat the rules and introduce the symbol for multiplication as you did for addition.

Subtraction

Follow the same procedures as for addition (begin with static problems, explain and repeat the rules, introduce the symbol by writing it in green) but explain the rules for subtraction. Say, “Today we’re going to do some subtraction work. Subtraction means take it away. We always start by taking away the smallest thing first.” Again, encourage the children to repeat the rules and introduce the symbol for subtraction as you did for addition.

Short Division

Follow the same procedures as for addition (begin with static problems, explain and repeat the rules, introduce the symbol by writing it in blue) but explain the rules for division. Say, “Today we’re going to do some division work. There are three things you need to know to do division. First, division means share it fare. What does it mean? Second, we always start sharing the biggest thing first. What do we share first? Third, the answer is what one person gets. What’s the answer?” Again, encourage the children to repeat the rules and introduce the symbol for division as you did for addition.

Long Division

After the child is adept with short division, you can introduce long division. Use green ribbons/skittles to represent one “person,” blue ones to represent ten “people,” and red to represent 100 “people.” First, review the rules for short division. Then, hand out the ribbons and explain what they mean. “You represent one person but you represent ten people. Imagine that you have 10 people in your family and they couldn’t be here today. So, you have to get enough for everyone. You’ll get 10 times more than everyone else.” Again, encourage the children to repeat the rules.

Notes

When you first begin working with these four operations, focus on the process rather than the accuracy of the results. If you discover one or two extra beads on the rug, discreetly steal them and hide them in your hand. (I would find many of these in my pockets at the end of a day.) Don’t let a simple counting error distract the children from internalizing the concept at hand.



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